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THE ULTIMATE GROUND OF AUTHORITY.

“THE bottom’s dun drop out, massa,” said Sambo, apologetically, when he broke the teapot. Out of how many less earthen vessels in which truth comes to us — laws, codes, ideals, institutions, cults, and creeds — does the bottom seem to be dropping out to-day. Like Sambo’s case, this is often due to our own unskilful handling. But it is also often due to a hasty judgment that they even seem to be irremediably shattered. It is certainly needless to repeat the commonplace remarks as to the present unsettled condition as regards the till recently unquestioned authorities in human affairs. Nor is it necessary to more than refer to the *de profundis* clamor in some quarters for the “good old ways,” and in others for new ways that shall be equally authoritative. Nor is it necessary to analyze fully this craving for infallible guidance, showing its weak ethical and spiritual character. Neither is it necessary to trace the course and results of “the age of criticism,” “a criticism,” as Kant said, “to which everything is obliged to submit,” and to which, since his day, everything has, *nolens volens*, submitted. Nor is it necessary to trace the deflecting tendencies of a weak romanticism ready to fall back upon irrational elements of life, or of a weaker agnosticism which no longer seeks for a *ποῦ στῶ*, while the main stream is making for reconstruction, rebottoming, — for criticised authorities that are still authorities. We believe that this is the great healthy moral and intellectual stream of tendency to-day, despite the many appearances to the contrary. The human spirit has been criticising authorities to find their real basis. The work has been the work of an age of faith, — of daring, soaring, and profound faith. The scepticism and iconoclasm has only been seeming or partial. The work has been search after reality, after bottom, after the “rock all the way down,” after the authority of authorities. The real ques-

tion has been, what is the concrete universal in which the visible particulars throb as members? what is the ultimate ground, source, basis, reason which authenticates — gives weight and worth to the various forms of authority which have been the educators of mankind? On its intellectual side it has been a critical regress upon the categories and ideals of reason to what they necessarily presuppose. In this method modern science and philosophy are one, differing only in the degree and extent of their procedure. The ultimate work is being done by philosophy — the synoptic and synthetic work of spirit, building upon and following out the necessary work of science. On its ethical side it has been a psychological and historical estimate of past and existing cults, codes, and institutions to find their radical source and basis. This part of the work is of much wider and nearer interest, but as it is never carried through without the aid of the philosophical work, we may place the philosophical first. That is, the task of finding the right of might, the ethical worth of code, creed, cult, and institution can only be performed by the aid of philosophy. The function of philosophy is simply the comprehending of the old and the new as elements of a rational process. It differs *in toto* from the not yet obsolete rationalism of the eighteenth century, in that it has no *a priori* ideal, no fixed quantity and measure of the rational. To it the real is the rational, however much it may contradict the subjective reason of the individual. It is a process, a movement of real logic through historic process of corporate man. Again it seeks *the ground*, rather than for “grounds” as the old rationalism did. Grounds or reasons are external and artificial, and not inherent. But such bolstering up with external props inevitably leads to sophistry, or the inventing of reasons that may seem to be valid. This is the resort of one who knows that he is defeated, that he has no real ground. Again, mere reasons are individualistic “points of view,” and one person’s are as good as another’s. Ground, on the contrary, is universal and objective, and yet immanent. It is that which is creative of differences and constitutive of unity. It is organic, catholic. It is the First Principle of all things. It is, in the most concrete

word possible, God. But it is God immanent, the living Ground of all forms and phases of existence. That which distinguishes philosophy from the mere rationalism of both superaturalism and naturalism is found in this conception of the immanence of the Ground in all phases of particularity. This rationalism never gets beyond a *Deus ex machina*. It bottoms all forms of faith and institution on that which is beyond. Its *jure divino* creeds, cults, decalogues, politics, are all based upon a transcendent mechanical First Principle. It never rises to a *res completa*. It always deals with parts without living organic link. With such forms criticism easily plays havoc. But philosophy sees these same forms as living parts of one self-evolving, self-realizing Idea, of the Absolute Unity which differentiates or particularizes itself, and yet is ever in and above all its particulars. Form and image may change, but the ever-living spirit persists through all change—the correlated and conserved force of the universe. Philosophy thus gives another *jure divino* basis to all the ever-changing forms of life, creed, code, and institution. It sees that the real is the relatively rational, not because any *status quo* is ultimate, but because it is a progressive manifestation of the reason that is at the heart of all that is. But when we thus dogmatically announce this Ultimate Ground, we find ourselves asking for reasons for it. To attempt to give external reasons would be to fall back into that unresolved dualism of rationalism which leads ultimately to agnosticism. For such a Ground, no sign or reason can be given, except that which is self-contained and self-authenticating. How then, let us ask, does God manifest Himself as the ground of all authority in the most comprehensive view of reality—philosophy?

Philosophy is interpretative of phenomenal reality. It is not *a priori*, but strictly inductive. Without the woof of experience it is as empty as experience without its warp is blind and chaotic. The laws which science discovers are inductive hypotheses. So we may say, at the risk of being misunderstood, that the God of philosophy is an inductive and yet necessary hypothesis. But how does it reach it? A critical esti-

mate of the "arguments for the existence of God" would be in order here, but out of proportion. Where then shall we begin? Rather where shall we not begin? For every bit of experience and every act of mind and will implicitly contains this First Principle. Let us begin with the simplest form of our consciousness and rise into that self-consciousness which is the magic and universally elastic and yet adamant circle which embraces all reality. Even Professor Huxley makes the confession for science "that all the phenomena of nature are, in their ultimate analysis, known to us only as facts of consciousness."

(a) The simplest phase of consciousness is that of indefinite otherness which becomes qualified into something distinct and separate from the self. Qualified sensations run into masses. We have a quantity of existence. Here we are in the realm of common sense, which sees definite isolated things. But it sees them in infinite time under the forms of quality and quantity. If we stop at this stage we only have a chaos of atoms in an empty void. But the mind which has already thrown its unifying power over isolated transient sensations to give us these atoms and the void, will not stop here.

(b) After quantifying sensations in definite aggregates, it goes on to distinguish, relate, and correlate them. Here the enviroing relations become the chief object of interest. Nothing in the world is single. Endless series of relations embrace and constitute anew what was at first separate and distinct. Environment is the fate which submerges isolated things. These relationing conditions are named ground, force, law, substance and properties, cause and effect, and finally reciprocity. These are categories or thought-forms through which the mind knows things together. They are the categories which science uses in its work of correlating endlessly diverse phenomena into system. Each thing is, only as it is determined by others as its cause. It is the realm of impersonal law, or of pantheistic matter, substance or force.

(c) But this is not ultimate. Thought still demands an *Urgrund* of this realm of relations. It demands a lawgiver for the law. It passes from causality to *causa sui*. That is, relativity demands

self-relation. An effect implies a self-separation in the cause — a transference of energy to its own created object. Reciprocity is the bridge by which thought makes this transition. The cause is seen to be as dependent upon its effect as the reverse. It first becomes a cause in its effect. Without this it would be causeless. Thus cause and effect have essential kinship, mutually begetting each other. They form one total, dividing itself off from itself and yet finding itself in both. Each is an *alter ego* begotten by the other, forming a totality of infinite connection with self, freely positing all differences and yet realizing only itself in them. It is always and everywhere the cause only of itself; that is, it is free self-activity. Self-separation is the essential presupposition or ground of causality. The infinite regress of cause and effect is futile. The totality of conditions must be self-sufficient, self-moving, self-separating, and self-relating, for outside of the totality there can be nothing causal. Hence changes in the totality of conditions are spontaneous or self-determined. Thus the categories of essence, which modern science uses, issue inductively in self-activity, self-relation, freedom, and personality — the ultimate and constitutive presupposition underlying all objects of sense and all forces, laws, and systems of science.

But as self-activity is not impersonal activity, neither can it be solitary activity. Self-consciousness is never an abstract, unitary activity. It is always constituted of trinal relations — subject, object, and subject-object. *Causa sui* begets eternally a second free self-activity as its own object. This again is creative in its self-recognition. Knowing is one with willing. In knowing himself, he creates a third equal one, in which the first also knows himself. The Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity is the ultimate speculative conception of the first principle, knowing, willing, loving. The perfect life of this true totality is a life of self-constituted relationships. It is timeless and spaceless. Knowing eternally creates its object of knowledge; willing, its product; and loving, its lover. In this trinity of relationship we may see love as the central constitutive ground, the absolute form of self-activity. The world and man are its manifestation

in time and space. The poet Dante saw how even hell was the creation of this "primal love" (Canto III, 6).

Common sense inventories things; science inventories relations; and philosophy explains both these inventories by the creative energy of the totality, or perfect self-consciousness.

But this *ascensio mentis ad Deum* is, I have said, an inductive process, a critical regress to the logical condition of all existence. It is thought's description of heaven, earth, and hell, so far as these have come within the magic realm of self-conscious experience. It is the concrete system of the fossilized intelligence of man in all departments of his experience. It is an inductive discovery and unification of the categories through which men know sensations, things, force, laws, self-activity. These types of thought came through empirical experience. Rather they made the experience which reveals them. Each type has embalmed the experience of generations. The experience of primeval man, of Oriental, Jewish, Greek, Roman, and Christian man, is the woof through the struggle to interpret which this warp of thought comes into human consciousness. It is the universal constitutive of all particulars which thought has labored at interpreting. The various names which thought has at various epochs given to this universal ground are called categories. The ultimate one of God, as concrete or Triune Personality, is reached only by thought thinking Christian experience. Philosophy without experience is empty, without progressive experience it is dead. It progresses with experience. Hence it cannot be the same after Christ that it was before Christ. To-day it must give a synopsis of the modern or Christian consciousness. The lowest category or conception of the universal ground was, perhaps, spatially the highest, — *i.e.* the Vedic Sky. This was an induction. So, too, was the Oriental conception of blank Being or Brahm, as well as the more modern ones of matter, substance, force. Thought tarries dogmatically upon one until new experience shows its inadequacy. Advance is made through new, or newly comprehended, revelation of the First Principle in the web of experience. This implies that the thinking man has lived through

and above all non-theistic, and all abstract theistic theories, the unsatisfactoriness of each successive one forcing thought to seek the truth just beyond, and yet implied in it, till concrete personality is reached and is seen to be the eternal presupposition lying back of and giving comparative worth to each imperfect one, and in which they are all abrogated and fulfilled. We may put the whole of philosophy in one sentence adapted from Augustine: Thou hast made our *minds* for Thee, O God, and they are restless till they rest in Thee. This is the goal of catholic philosophy, of corporate reason, which vindicates all the transcended steps of its progress to this ultimate ground of thought. This process of philosophy is just the reverse of abstract method. And the God of thought is the most concrete, catholic Real, reached not by a process of abstraction from particulars to a blank universal, but by a process of interpretation, an inclusion of particulars and their environment, — a totality in which all other categories live and move and have their being.

But if this is such a concrete General, it must show itself capable of yielding in turn that from which it has been inducted. If this is the interpretation of experience, it must also be its interpreter. If this is the ultimate standpoint of reason, it must be evident how it bottoms all that is; it must explain all thoughts and things as parts of a great process of creation, or of the self-revelation of God. It is not sufficient to say that "the real is the rational," if by the real we mean only a sterile universal. This would be of less worth than the deistic *Deus ex machina*. This First Principle must show itself as the metaphysics (*μετά*, in the midst of) of nature, man, and his institutions.

This reverse process of tracing the genesis and relative validity of the particulars from this concrete Reality is as difficult as it is necessary. Its relation to the current authority of physical and ethical law, state, church, Bible, spirit of peoples, prophets and lawgivers, is not immediately evident. How does it bottom them, render them relatively *jure divino*? Limits of space preclude more than a mere indication of the principle and method of this work, and of the validity to be expected.

The crucial point is the transition from the perfect First Principle to an imperfect world, *i.e.* to creation. Here the creation *ex nihilo* and the emanation theories are the Scylla and Charybdis. From neither of them can thought pass to an adequate First Principle; nor, on the other hand, can they mediate between it and creation. They are unworthy of the God of philosophy. To-day there is an attempt to revive a spiritualized form of the primordial "Τλη upon which the Demiurge worked. Started anew by Jacob Boehme, this theosophic speculation of a *φύσις*—an eternal non-material substance in God as the source of creation—is forcing itself into the systems of Christian theologians. This is a commendable attempt to avoid the rocks and the whirlpool. But it is not, and cannot be, ultimate till the *φύσις* is wholly resolved and transmuted in the Divine Glory. This alone can save it from the maintenance of the eternity of the finite, or of matter, and make creation to be a form of free self-activity of the Divine. Poetic, religious, and symbolic forms cannot pass for the pure, *i.e.* concrete, thought, which philosophy demands.

Now, the First Principle reached by philosophy and stated in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity can be seen as self-sufficient, and sufficient for creation as a free process of self-activity—the creation going forth in imperfect form *in order* to return in perfect form; *i.e.* a process in time and space with the one sole final purpose of the evolution and education of rational immortal souls, in a perfect kingdom of God. The world as such is not divine, but a procession which includes its return to the Divine. That is, the First Principle yields a rational and teleological basis and view of creation and its history. The final cause is the true first cause.

Creation in all its present forms and in its totality is imperfect. *Respice finem* is philosophy's antidote to doubt, awakened by imperfect and transitory forms of life and creed. Reason is immanent in and governs the world, but the world as it is, is not equal to, does not exhaust Reason—the Totality. "Anthropo-cosmic theism" is the valid interpretation of the creation, while creation is not exhaustive of the Divine. It contains

all degrees of *unreason* as well as of reason. It is not, even as a totality, the perfect, but a process towards the perfect. Nothing ultimate or infallible can be looked for in this temporal process, nor, on the other hand, can it be looked at apart from its ultimate and essential destiny. There may be three false verdicts as to creation : all things are divine ; nothing is divine ; some things are divine. The last has been the contention of abstract supernaturalists. They pervert the church doctrine of the God-man, into an assertion that the man Jesus, in his state of humiliation (*kenosis*), was only veiled deity and deny that he "increased in wisdom and stature" to his full-orbed Divinity at the Ascension. Much of the lately prevalent orthodoxy has run through the gamut of excluded heresies, especially those of Doketism and Monophysitism. Again, it has applied its abstract canon to the Bible and the church, seeking to take them out of the realm of the historic process, thus going as wide of the mark as those who find no visible historical continuity in the church, and no record of authoritative revelations in the Bible. Such abstract views are accountable for much of current scepticism. The state is *jure divino*. "There is no power (civil), but of God," yet Christians have long since ceased to stamp any one form as ultimate. The church is *jure divino*, yet with pulse-beat of historical continuity it can claim finality in no one partial form. The church is never wholly holy and never wholly whole or catholic. It is expanding into catholicity, growing up into the holiness of its Holy Spirit. So, too, of prophets, lawgivers, the moral sentiment of the community, the fixed laws of a social state, — none of these are ever ultimate or infallible (ecclesiastical anathema, or civil proscription to the contrary), because they are only parts of a great process that is moving on in and through temporal, transitory forms, returning them in enriched educated form whence they sprang. Nothing finite can be ultimate, nor can it be at all without being in some way a member of the larger process towards the ultimate.

Pantheism, which identifies the immediate actual forms of existence with the divine, is even more unphilosophical than the supernatural form of rationalism, which says that only some

things are divine. This is, at least, semi-critical, while pantheism is wholly uncritical. Philosophy, however, differs from both of these in affirming a progressive realization of rationality in the world-process. It claims to see enough of the process to have caught its whence and whither, and thus to have an instrument of criticism and a canon of valuation. Briefly stated it is this : the First Principle of the Universe is Personality, or thinking, loving will, going forth in a temporal process with the teleological aim of returning with a whole commonwealth of souls educated into his own image. The First Principle is Reason and the temporal process is toward Reason, each phase manifesting some phase of rationality. The world of human history manifests this rationality no less, nay more, than the world of natural history. History is neither an immediate work of God, nor is it an apostasy from God. It is a process from and to God, a process of the education of man into rationality, or the concrete freedom of the Sons of God in his kingdom. On God's side it manifests his Providence; on man's side it is humanity making itself, or coming to a practical consciousness of its rational freedom. Enough of this has been attained to give us an estimate of the past and a forecast of the future. Man is what he now is by virtue of those authoritative beliefs and institutions, religious and political, which have held society together and educated it. Some of them have been very rudimentary teachings of that essential intelligence that constitutes the essence and the destiny of man. God "hath determined the times before appointed," the organic epochs of peoples and eras, the ganglionic centres, which sum up and express the spirit, the rationality of various times and peoples.

This of course implies an historical and psychological study of the origin and growth of all human institutions. But it also implies a philosophical or teleological estimate of all human history. Our First Principle interprets it as the reason of humanity organizing and instituting its needs and ideals in its onward stumbling to and fro between its own true character and its passing caricature. History is thus interpreted as a series of intelligent events, a progressive eduction of the rationality of man

in his institutions, in state, art, and religion. Wherever two or three are met together to consult about and devise a common good, and wherever this common good widens in extent and deepens in quality, there is seen the implicit spirit of rationality, outerring itself. As in nature nothing is without interest, significance, rationality to the student of science, so in human history, no creed, cult, or institution is without interest and significance. As the student of nature traces the increase of rationality from the lowest form of inorganic matter up to its most organic form in man, so does the student of philosophy trace the increase of this rationality from the lowest form of ethical and religious life, up to its most organic, fulfilled form in the Incarnation and its extension in the life of the world. Up to the Christ, was the course of the world's history B.C. Up into Christ, has been its course through all the centuries A.D. In Christ was the perfect revelation of the character of the First Principle, the goal and the starting-point of all true human history. Throughout the process this final cause dominates all empirical causes, using them only as plastic materials for its own self-formation. The merely historical method may easily invalidate any dogmatic theory of innate ideas and conscience, or any mechanically *jure divino* origin of rational institutions, but the philosophical method easily recovers them for the divine world-order. Man may be historically derived from the beasts, but he is none the less more than a beast, more than the mere sum of antecedent empirical conditions of his genesis "out of the dust of the ground." Even science gives up the task of explaining the higher by the lower form, and finds in self-consciousness the ultimate explanation of nature. Nor, on the other hand, is the real value of the family, the state, and the church, to be found in their being traced back to some mysterious *ab extra* divine origin. Their value at any time consists in their adequacy to educate and express the highest current and nascent forms of human well-being or concrete freedom. This end is their real beginning. Ἡ δὲ φύσις τέλος ἔστι. Their phase of rationality is the measure of their worth, and the measure of temporal rationality is the idea of concrete corporate free-

dom of spirit in institutions. The very faculty of knowledge which accomplishes the results of scientific history implies, further, an eternal self-consciousness, eternally self-realized, and yet eternally realizing itself in temporal conditions. Nothing exists rationally except for self-consciousness, and all things only for an eternal Self-Consciousness. The theory of knowledge, then, is ultimate for man in his study and his estimation of all that is. The knowledge of all temporal conditions can never itself be a part or product of these conditions, as they are only objects of this knowledge. It is to this spiritual principle, then, to which we must refer for parentage, all the institutions, usages, social codes, and aspirations, through which man has become so far rationalized. The real at any time and place is the relatively rational for that time and place, but the end is not yet. The Mosaic economy for the Jews was one phase of this rationality. That of the Roman law was another phase, even for Christians. Even when Nero was its minister, St. Paul could tell Christians, "There is no power but of God," and "he is the minister of God to thee for good." But this is far from identifying the actual at any time with the rational, the good. The concrete principle forbids the glorification of any *status quo*, and compels historical perspective. It sees only a series of increasingly adequate manifestations and vehicles of the true spirit of man. The highest form to-day is given for us in all distinctively Christian institutions. Other objective forms of rationality are not now the *φύσις* of man. Other spirit of rationality can never be for man, however much its outward forms may change, as man is educated "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ" — the eternal Reason, the goal and the starting-point of man's true history. This is the bed-rock, the bottom, the immanent formative and life-sustaining power in all the current phases of educative authority. Limits of space absolutely preclude any illustrative application of this ultimate bottom of all authority to current forms of social, civil, and religious authorities.

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